

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1126
ANSWERED ON:02.08.2006
UTILISATION OF USO FUND .
Bishnoi Shri Kuldeep

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) The total amount available at present in the Universal Service Obligation (USO) fund;
- (b) Whether the Government has prepared any plan to streamline the utilisation of USO fund to provide telecom connectivity to 66,822 revenue villages in the country;
- (c) If so, the details thereof; and
- (d) The steps taken by the Government to provide Village Public Telephone (VPT) in every village of the country and also to upgrade the rural telecom infrastructure?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD)

- (a) A sum of Rs.1500 crore has been allocated to Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) for the financial year 2006-07.
- (b) & (c) Yes, Sir. USOF has entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in November 2004 for provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in 66,822 unconnected eligible villages in the country. This excludes villages having less than 100 population and lying in thick forest areas/ naxalite infested areas etc. Out of these villages, 27,481 villages have already been provided with VPTs by BSNL as on 30th June 2006. The remaining 39,341 villages will be provided VPTs by November 2007.
- (d) Following steps have been taken by the Government to provide VPT in every village of the country and also to upgrade the rural telephone infrastructure:-
 - (i) Provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in all the remaining uncovered eligible villages, excluding villages having less than 100 population, lying in thick forest areas/ naxalite infested areas etc.
 - (ii) Provision of Rural Community Phones (RCPs) with population more than 2000 and where there are no Public Call Offices (PCOs).
 - (iii) Replacement of Multi-Access Radio Relay (MARR) VPTs.
 - (iv) Provision of Rural individual phone connections (RDELs) on demand in 1685 commercially unviable Short Distance Charging Areas (SDCAs).
 - (v) Large scale deployment of Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) network in rural areas by BSNL.
 - (vi) Relaxation of the outdoor cable norms to 5 Kms as against the earlier norm of 2.5 Kms for landline exchanges by BSNL.
 - (vii) BSNL has planned extensive infrastructure rollout which will provide mobile coverage.